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Letters

To Protect Our Agents

To the Editor:

On Dec. 17, you reported correctly that the Senate postponed action on the Intelligence Identities Protection Act at my request but failed to explain why I took this position, which might leave the impression that I oppose the bill.

In fact, I believe we need legislation that will protect U.S. intelligence agents from reckless or malicious disclosure of their identity. But I also believe the legislation must be carefully drafted so that it does not conflict with basic freedoms in America. The bill reported by the Senate Judiciary Committee strikes the proper balance between protecting covert operatives and guarding the rights of all Americans to freedom of speech and a free press. I support its passage.

Thus, the issue before the Senate was not whether we would protect our agents, since the director of the C.I.A. had testified that the committee version, the version I support, would accomplish that task. What I opposed was a last-minute attempt before adjournment to push through major changes in that bill. Those changes would not improve protection for our intelligence agents but would substantially limit the public's right to know about matters of legitimate concern to all Americans.

BILL BRADLEY

U.S. Senator from New Jersey
Washington, Dec. 18, 1981